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Varieties of Pacifism



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*Varieties of Pacifism*

By

CHARLES E. JEFFERSON

WORLD ALLIANCE  
FOR INTERNATIONAL FRIENDSHIP?  
THROUGH THE CHURCHES  
70 FIFTH AVENUE  
NEW YORK

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*Varieties of Pacifism*

*By*

CHARLES E. JEFFERSON

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EVERY one should ponder the meaning of pacifism. It is a comparatively new word. I was surprised on going the other day to Webster's Unabridged Dictionary published fourteen years ago, to discover that the word "pacifism" is not to be found there. I then looked for the word "pacifist" and to my amazement, even that word was absent. It seems incredible that in an unabridged dictionary published fourteen years ago, neither of those two words should appear. Within the last fourteen years they have forged steadily to the front until they are now in everybody's mouth. Like all new words, they are not generally understood. Many of us have a vague notion of what they mean, but we do not know exactly. In dealing with all momentous problems, it is necessary that we should speak with precision and that we should know the exact meaning of every term made use of in the discussion. There are many persons who are prejudiced against pacifism. They do not know exactly what it is, but they do not like it. It is associated in their minds with bolshevism and communism and anarchism, and other "isms," all of them mischievous and deadly. They are prejudiced against pacifists. They think that a pacifist is somewhere between a Don Quixote and a Benedict Arnold. At his best, he is an impractical dreamer, and at his worst he may turn out to be a slacker or a traitor. There are others, however, who are biased in favor of pacifism. They like it because it is something

new. They take to it as they would take to a new form of breakfast food. Nothing delights them so much as things that are novel, and they are therefore favorably disposed toward pacifists. They like a pacifist because he is an advanced thinker, and more or less a hero. He dares to be something that many men are afraid to be. There is a deal of confusion in the use of these two words.

But no matter what pacifism is, it is increasing. General Harbord is right when he says that "the tide of pacifism was never higher than it is at the present hour." It has been steadily growing through the last ten years. The Great War manufactured pacifists by the thousands. The horror of war has given pacifism a fresh vigor. There has never been on this earth such an abhorrence of war as there is now, and that is because millions of men know what war is. Nobody knows what war is unless he has been in it. You can have no idea of war from hearsay. Nobody can tell you what it is. You cannot learn what it is from books. You can read descriptions of it, but descriptions do not tell you what it is. In order to know war, you must be in it. A book does not give you the smell of gangrened flesh or the sickening odor of unwashed bodies clothed in raiment infested with vermin, or the awful stench of rotting carcasses of animals, or putrefied corpses of men. You cannot get that out of books. You cannot



catch the sounds of pain in books. You cannot hear the sighing of a boy whose life is ebbing away, and who keeps on saying "Mother, Mother," until his heart stops beating. You cannot hear the groan of a man whose legs have been blown off, or the shriek of a man whose every breath is an agony. You cannot hear the death rattle in a single throat, much less in a thousand throats. These things are not to be found in books. Nor can you get the sights of war in books. You cannot see the twitching of a nerve, the spasm of a muscle, the contortion of a body twisted into terrible shapes by a torture that cannot be expressed. You cannot see the glazing of eyes in death. Nobody knows what war is who has not been in war. There are millions of men who now know.

It was a great surprise to some of us that when our boys came back from the front, those who had been really in the war, refused to talk about it. We wanted them to tell us something, and they would not do it. It was all so horrible they longed to get rid of it. Their only desire was to have it fade out of the mind. Two of our soldiers have recently written a play in order to give people an idea of what war really is. They were disgusted by the way in which war had been presented on the stage—befooling people as to its real character, and so they wrote a play setting forth war as they

know it; and it was so brutal and vulgar and beastly, that there was an immediate protest against it. Military officers at once cried out against it, saying it would stop enlistments, and the City Government promptly stepped in and said, "You must tone this down a little." It is impossible to put war as it is on the stage. The horror of war has made pacifists, but even more potent is the demonstrated futility of war. These two forces together have given pacifism its present vogue.

Within the last six years, multitudes have undergone a vast disillusionment. During the war, men used high-sounding words, and made beautiful promises. They talked about getting a better world, but the better world has not yet come. After the war we were going to have a happier world, but the happier world is not yet in sight. Some of us talked about a great spiritual revival—so ignorant of history that we did not know that war is never followed by a spiritual revival, but always by a spiritual deadening and coarsening. In England they talked about making England fit for heroes to live in, and hundreds of thousands of men who are standing in the street waiting for a job that they cannot find, are muttering amid their curses, "never again." I had no idea how an Englishman could speak those words, until I heard them spoken in different parts of England.

In our own country we were charmed by two thrilling slogans—"This is a war to end war." "This is a war to make the world safe for democracy." It did not make the world safe for anything. It did not make the world safe for human life. Human life is more unsafe than it has ever been. It did not make the world safe for property. Property has never been more insecure. Democracy in Europe is fighting for its life. Europe has drifted back to oligarchies—Mussolini in Italy and Rivera in Spain have put democracy in their pocket, and they are lording it over their nations after the fashion of the old pagan dictators. You never can make the world safe for democracy by war. And, as for putting an end to war by war, that also is impossible. There are more smoldering fires on the continent of Europe today than ever before. War intensifies all the old hatreds and creates a lot of new ones. The only reason why the nations of Europe are not fighting today, is because they are exhausted. Men are coming to see this. Thousands are seeing it. Millions will yet see it, and so Pacifists are increasing in number all the time.

Only a little while ago, a prominent Chicago paper, published the testimony of a man who described the making of a pacifist. In our City, Mr. La Guardia, one of our Representatives in Congress, has recently proclaimed himself publicly

a pacifist. He was a Major in our American Air forces during the war, and what he saw then brought about his conversion. He was not a coward in the war, and he is determined not to be a coward in peace. He shouts it from the house top, so that everybody can hear, "I am a pacifist!" Dr. Sherwood Eddy, who speaks to several hundreds of thousands of people every year, has recently announced himself a pacifist. During the war, he was one of the most belligerent of all Americans. He was impatient for America to get into the struggle, and after it was in he rushed at once to the front, but he saw things, and heard things which caused his conscience no end of trouble; and the outcome of it all is that he is now a pacifist of the most extreme and radical type. Even the generals—some of them—have become pacifists. Not long ago, General Duncan declared, "There is no greater pacifist in the world than I am." And so pacifism, like a mighty tidal wave, is flowing around the world.

Within the last two years, all the great religious denominations of our country, and most of the smaller ones too, have come out boldly denouncing war. I hope that you have read these declarations. They furnish most astonishing reading. They make use of language which would have been absolutely impossible ten years ago. The whole Christian world has moved forward, and there are

multitudes of men and women in every denomination who are determined to put an end to the whole war system. It is a great day for pacifists, and if any of you have been in the habit of sneering at pacifism, and scoffing at pacifists, if I were in your place, I should think twice before I did it again. When you sneer at pacifism and pacifists, you are showing that you are belated—you do not know what is going on—you do not know in what direction the deepest currents of human life are flowing. Pacifism is one of the mightiest movements of our day, and it behooves all people to take note of it—to measure the dimensions of it, and to ponder just what may ultimately come out of it.

And now we are ready for a definition of pacifism. I have been reading pacifistic books for many years, and yet I do not remember ever to have seen a definition of pacifism. I have an idea what it is, and never having seen a definition I have been obliged to coin one of my own. I want to submit it to you in order that you may think about it, and improve it if you can. This is my idea of pacifism: It is a philosophy, a spirit, and a program. It is the philosophy of life which places the major emphasis on moral influence rather than on physical force. It is the spirit of good will, aiming to attain its objects not by violence, but by gentleness. It is a program in

which the combatants in a dispute appeal to conscience and reason and not to guns. That, I think, is pacifism, and every man who believes this and acts on this is, I think, a pacifist.

We are all pacifists up to a certain point. We are all moving in the same direction, but some have gotten farther on than others. In the realm of every-day conduct, we are all pacifists in the sense that we deprecate violence. We do not believe in the use of guns. We count it dangerous for men to carry concealed weapons. It has been demonstrated by experience that concealed weapons are a menace to the welfare of society, and so society has taken the matter into its own hands, and has forbidden the carrying of concealed weapons. Society boldly says to a man, "You shall not do that—you shall not settle your disputes by the use of guns. You must make your appeal to conscience and to reason." If a policeman finds a man carrying a gun, that man is at once listed among the criminals, and society punishes him for his misdemeanor. If negroes carry razors, they slash one another. If Italians carry stilettos, they stab one another. If Chinese carry dirks, they drive them into one another's backs. Society is always feverish and in commotion when large numbers of men carry deadly weapons. We are all pacifists in the realm of individual action. If men fight with their fists,

we say, "they are no gentlemen." When they fight with clubs, we call them "rowdies." When they fight with guns, we call them "desperadoes." When they fight duels, we know that they do not belong to our class. We look down upon dueling as a survival of a barbaric past. We are all pacifists. We believe in moral influence and gentleness, and in relying on conscience and reason.

We are pacifists when we talk to boys. If we find two boys pummeling each other because they have gotten into some dispute over their marbles, we say to them right in the midst of their fight, "You little scamps, stop that! You ought to be ashamed of yourselves. Go home!" In the presence of fighting boys, we are all pacifists instinctively and at once. All parents are pacifists in the bringing up of their children. Most children at a certain stage of their development seem to be militarists but their parents are always pacifists. "Now Johnnie, you must not fight your little brother." That is pacifism. "Do not pull your sister's hair." That is pacifism also. You have never seen fathers or mothers who are not pacifists in dealing with their children. We have evolved far enough in our ethical development to see that nothing but pacifism in the sphere of individual conduct will work.

We are pacifists in the realm of religion. We all confess that Christians must not fight one

another with deadly weapons. The only weapon that is appropriate among Christians is the method of gentleness. In dealing with our fellow Christians, we must always depend upon conscience and reason. Probably there is no more disheartening story in history than that of Ireland. Ireland has for generations been a scandal to the Christian world—all because in Ireland Christians fight one another. Neither side can have a procession without it ending in a half a dozen street fights. Again and again the Irish Protestants and the Catholics have fought one another with guns. It is all a disgrace. Catholics say it is. Protestants say it is. Everybody knows it is. We are all pacifists in the realm of religion. There is a similar scandal in the near East. As soon as I got into Palestine, they began to tell me that it was necessary for the Mohammedan Government to have special policemen look after the Holy Places, in order to keep the Greek Catholics and the Roman Catholics from fighting one another. We look upon all such situations with feelings of humiliation and shame. We are confirmed pacifists in the realm of religion. If the Ku Klux Klan should begin to buy guns, and the Knights of Columbus should begin to arm, we should all cry out in horror, "Gentlemen do not do that—that is un-American, that is unchristian, that is abominable. If you do that,



you will tear society to pieces." We are all pacifists in the realm of religion. We are unwilling that Christians should fight religious people who are not Christians. If we were going to fight any body of nonchristian people, we should probably be as ready to fight Mohammedans as any other. But we should not fight Mohammedans, we have become so pacifistic we are not willing to fight any religion. We should think we were traitors to Christ if we fought any religion in the world. There was a time when Christians fought Mohammedans. There were the Crusaders. We are not proud of them today. We apologize for them. We denounce them as outbursts of savage fanaticism. They belong to the dark ages. The world is very dark indeed when religious people fight one another. We have evolved far enough to see clearly that in the realm of religion, we must make use of methods that are gentle, relying all the time upon conscience and reason.

We are all pacifists in the realm of industry. Sometimes labor unions, after they have declared a strike, have resorted to violence, or if the unions have not done it, individual members of unions have done it. They have destroyed property, and beaten their fellow workers, and sometimes human life has been taken, and now and then corporations in order to protect their property

have hired guards and supplied them with arms. When both sides have become armed, bloodshed has been the inevitable result. Again and again our American soil has been reddened with blood in this industrial strife, and we all know it is wrong. We all denounce it. Whenever workers resort to violence we condemn them. No matter how just their cause, they are in the wrong whenever they make use of deadly weapons. There is no difference in opinion in regard to that. In regard to the use of violence all employers, all the members of the Chambers of Commerce, and all the members of the Boards of Trade, and all the directors of the great corporations all over this country are pacifists. When it comes to talking to employees, they grip the fundamental principle of pacifism with both hands. They accept the cardinal doctrine of pacifism without question. They urge all men to abstain from violence, and to rely upon conscience and reason. That is an interesting fact, that all the business men of this country are pacifists in the realm of business. We have evolved far enough to see that violence is bad, that guns only make mischief, that the only way to settle our differences is by the arbitrament of reason.

We have not forgotten the massacre at Herrin. I was in London at the time, and I shall never forget how ashamed I was when I read the horrible

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story. I did not like to go out of my hotel. I shrank from walking down Fleet Street. I thought that Englishmen would look at me saying, "There goes an American. He lives in a country inhabited by savages." I tried to comfort myself by saying to myself, "Oh, they were not real Americans, they were foreigners—probably they were Catholics, Greek Catholics or Roman Catholics, or possibly they were atheists and did not believe in God at all. I did not know where Herrin was, but I felt sure it must be some God-forsaken hole in some out of the way corner in Illinois, where they had no schools or churches, and where men had been allowed to revert to savagery. On coming home, I was astonished to find what a fine place Herrin is. It is a beautiful city, altogether up-to-date. It is not a city of foreigners. It is not nearly so foreign as many of our Eastern cities. Only one-quarter of its population are foreign born. It is not a Catholic city, but a Protestant one. Most of the churches are Protestant. It is not an uneducated city. It is proud of its high schools. It has big hotels and flourishing stores, a good library, a fine hospital, and its churches are unusually prosperous. The congregations are large. There are large Sunday schools, and large Bible classes for men—one of them so large it was necessary to hold its sessions in a theatre. Traveling men

think that Herrin is one of the best business places in the Middle West. What is the matter with Herrin? Too many guns! Certain things were not going right in Herrin, and somebody suggested the use of force. That led to all the tragedies that followed. The whole of Williamson County is wrapped today in a black atmosphere of suspicion and hate, all because of the use of guns. No matter how many schools you have, society is headed for the abyss if it uses guns. No matter how many churches you have, or how many Bible classes, or how many prayers you offer, society sinks into hell if it uses guns. We are living in a universe that does not allow us to use guns. Many of us can see that. Everybody will see it some day. The only right methods are methods of gentleness, and of good will. Differences must be settled not by an appeal to guns, but to reason. We are all, therefore, Pacifists up to a certain point.

It is not until we come into the realm of international relationships, that we begin to differ from one another, and the difference then is not in regard to fundamental principle, but in regard to program. In the realm of international conduct we are pacifists in theory. We all believe in moral influence rather than in physical force. We all deprecate violence. We all abhor war. There are no people any more who clamor after war.

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Secretary Weeks abhors war. He has said it again and again. He wants peace. Secretary Wilbur abhors war. The cause of peace is dear to his heart. Assistant Secretary Davis abhors war. He said it most eloquently in his last speech. All of our naval officers, and all of our war officers want peace. You do them a great injustice if you imagine they are hungering and thirsting for war. In theory they are all pacifists. I hope you have read what General Bliss has said, and what General O’Ryan has said, and what General Weigel has said. The military officers of America are nearly all pacifists in their philosophy, and also in their spirit. It is only when we come to framing a program that Americans differ.

The military men of Europe are becoming pacifistic. Sir Ian Hamilton was asked not long ago to unveil a monument, and at the unveiling he made a speech. He has been a soldier all his life, but he said, “War must be ended.” He had been convinced by a sight he had seen. He had watched some little boys and girls putting flowers on their fathers’ graves. Their fathers had died in the Great War, and when he saw them strewing flowers, he said, “This thing must stop!” There is an international association made up of ex-fighting men. They held a meeting not long ago in the City of London. Several cripples of the Great War carried out a big wreath of laurel and roses to

place on a soldier's grave. In the evening a great banquet was held, and at the banquet Field Marshall Haig made a speech, in which he said, "We have still one victory to win—the victory of peace." All right-thinking men are today pacifists in theory. They all agree on the fundamental principle of pacifism. They only differ in regard to the way in which the principle can be applied to a world like this. It is at this point that men fall into different classes.

I wish now to describe the three classes of International pacifists, and you can tell then in which class you belong. We may call the first class the conservative pacifists, the second class the moderate pacifists, the third class the non-resistant pacifists. The conservative pacifists believe in peace, and work for peace, and believe that peace can be most surely attained by universal and gradual disarmament. They are convinced that we never can have permanent peace so long as nations arm themselves for war. Therefore, the nations must get together and devise ways of reducing their military and naval establishments. One such conference has been held in Washington City, and other conferences must follow. Armaments are a burden, a menace, and a folly. Military and naval budgets must be scaled down. We must work constantly and unitedly for a disarmed

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world, for only such a world can be at peace. This is the largest class of pacifists.

The pacifists of the second class believe in drastic and immediate reduction of armaments. They do not ask that the army and navy be completely abolished. They believe in a small army, and a small navy to be used for police purposes in time of peace, but they are not in favor of a fighting machine either on land or on sea, created for the purpose of fighting a duel with any other nation. These pacifists feel that gradual and universal disarmament is too slow. It might drag on for many years, and in the meantime there might come another world war. They believe that the only sure way to peace is for some great nation to disarm and set an example which other nations might follow. It would have to be a great nation. Denmark, for instance, might disarm but this would not help the world situation, because Denmark is too small. If disarmament of a single nation is to be efficacious, it must be the disarmament of one of the world powers; for instance, the United States might disarm. It might say to all the nations of the earth, "We will go no further in this business. We are not going to fight any nation. We are going to believe that no nation will fight us. We will trust all the nations of the earth. We will not prepare a navy to fight the British." Three of our Presidents

have said that war between Britain and the United States is unthinkable, and if it is unthinkable, why should we prepare to fight a war with Britain? War with France is also unthinkable. Why then prepare a flotilla of airships to fight France. War with any European nation is unthinkable, and therefore, why prepare to fight Europe at all. War with China is unthinkable and war with Japan is unthinkable. Shibusawa, one of the greatest Japanese of our day, was right when he said that, "If Japan and the United States ever go to war, it will be because both peoples have degenerated into idiots." These pacifists of the second group want our country to lead the world. When men say "Ah! this is too great a risk for one nation alone to lay down its arms," the answer that these pacifists make is that the risk is greater by adopting the other method. Everything is a risk in a world like this, and you must always take a risk, no matter what you do. It is a risk for the United States to lay down its arms, but it is also a risk for the United States to keep on arming. As to which is the greater risk, men differ in their judgment, but moderate pacifists would be happy to take the risk of having their country lay down its arms and say boldly to all the world, "We are forever done with war. We shall not prepare to fight any nation." If some one says, "But ah! that is impractical," the answer is,



“You have no right to say that, that is a bumptious word, and you must not use it. How do you know it is impractical? It has never yet been tried. The plan of preparedness has been tried. All Christendom has tried that. It looked plausible on paper. It looked as though it might work, and we tried it, with what result—the whole world knows. The program of preparedness has been tested and demonstrated to be impractical!” There are many pacifists who believe that we had better try another program, and find out whether that is impractical or not.

There is a third class of pacifist—the non-resistant or radical pacifists, and to many people these are the only pacifists who really have a right to bear that name. When they sneer at pacifism, they do not think of the conservative pacifists who contend for universal disarmament—or even of the moderate pacifists who contend for national disarmament, but think only of the nonresistant pacifists, who refuse to fight under any conditions, or for any cause. There are pacifists who claim that war is always a sin, the greatest and most ruinous of all collective sins, and that no man can participate in any war without sinning against his Maker. The killing of human beings in war—so these pacifists think—is always wrong, and no man should be willing to do it no matter what his Government may command. If a Government

declares war, and orders a man to fight then it is the duty of that man to disobey his Government. It may imprison him. He will go to prison. It may shoot him. He is willing to be shot. There is one thing he is not willing to do and that is to fight. This is the Quaker position, and the Mennonite and the Dukhobor position, and the Tolstoyan position. It is a position which an increasing number of men in all parts of the world are taking. It is the increase of these radical pacifists that is causing many thoughtful people deep concern. It is difficult to see just what the outcome is going to be. In the last war there were several thousand conscientious objectors in England—many more there than here, because the British mind is far more independent on a point like this than the American mind. We had over a thousand conscientious objectors in our country, but if another war comes the conscientious objectors in England will be numbered by the hundred thousands, and nobody can say how many we are going to have in this country. The British Government will think a long while before it declares war on any nation again. The radical pacifists have become too numerous, and if things go on as they are going on at present, the United States Government will have to think many a day before it asks Americans to fight again.

There are some people who feel that the only

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way to end war is by educating young men to take the position, that no matter what the alleged cause of the war is, they will not fight. Formerly a distinction was made between just wars and unjust wars. It was considered right to fight in a just war, and wrong to fight in an unjust war, but experience has shown that the distinction is of no value, for the reason that every nation believes that it is fighting on the right side. In our Civil War, which was the just side? To the North it was the Union side—to the South it was the Confederate side. Lee and Stonewall Jackson were just as conscientious as Grant and Sherman. They were as good men in every respect, and they were convinced that the South was fighting for the right. At present there is an effort to make a distinction between aggressive wars and defensive wars. Aggressive wars are always to be condemned. Defensive wars are justifiable, but that distinction also is of little worth. We have had a recent demonstration of its futility. Every nation fights in self-defense. No nation would ever be willing to admit that it was fighting an aggressive war. The German people are as intelligent as any other people on earth. They are as well-educated as any other. They are as capable of reasoning a problem through and arriving at a sound conclusion as any people in the whole world, and yet the German Government was able to educate its

people to believe that Germany was fighting a defensive war. And, therefore, there are pacifists who insist that we can make no distinction between wars—that every war is bad—that to participate in any war is wrong, and that the only way to end war is to have men say, “We refuse to fight!”

These, then, are the three classes. All these classes are represented in every company of thoughtful people throughout the country; but no matter which class we belong to, there are a few things on which, it seems to me, we might all agree. We might all agree that the time has come to outlaw war—to take away its legal standing. You have heard people say, “War is a crime.” That is a rhetorical way of speaking, but it is not correct. War is not a crime. You may call war an atrocity, or an outrage, or a curse, or a scourge, or a sin, but you have no right to call it a crime. A crime is an act that is forbidden by Government, and the Governments of the world have never declared war to be a crime. International law has not forbidden it. War, up to the present time, is in good and regular standing among the nations of the earth. That is why the Allies could not hang the Kaiser. There were many people who wanted to do it, thinking that he did not deserve to live, but he fled to Holland and the Allies could not get their hands upon him. They asked Holland to give him up, but Holland said, “I will not do it, because he is

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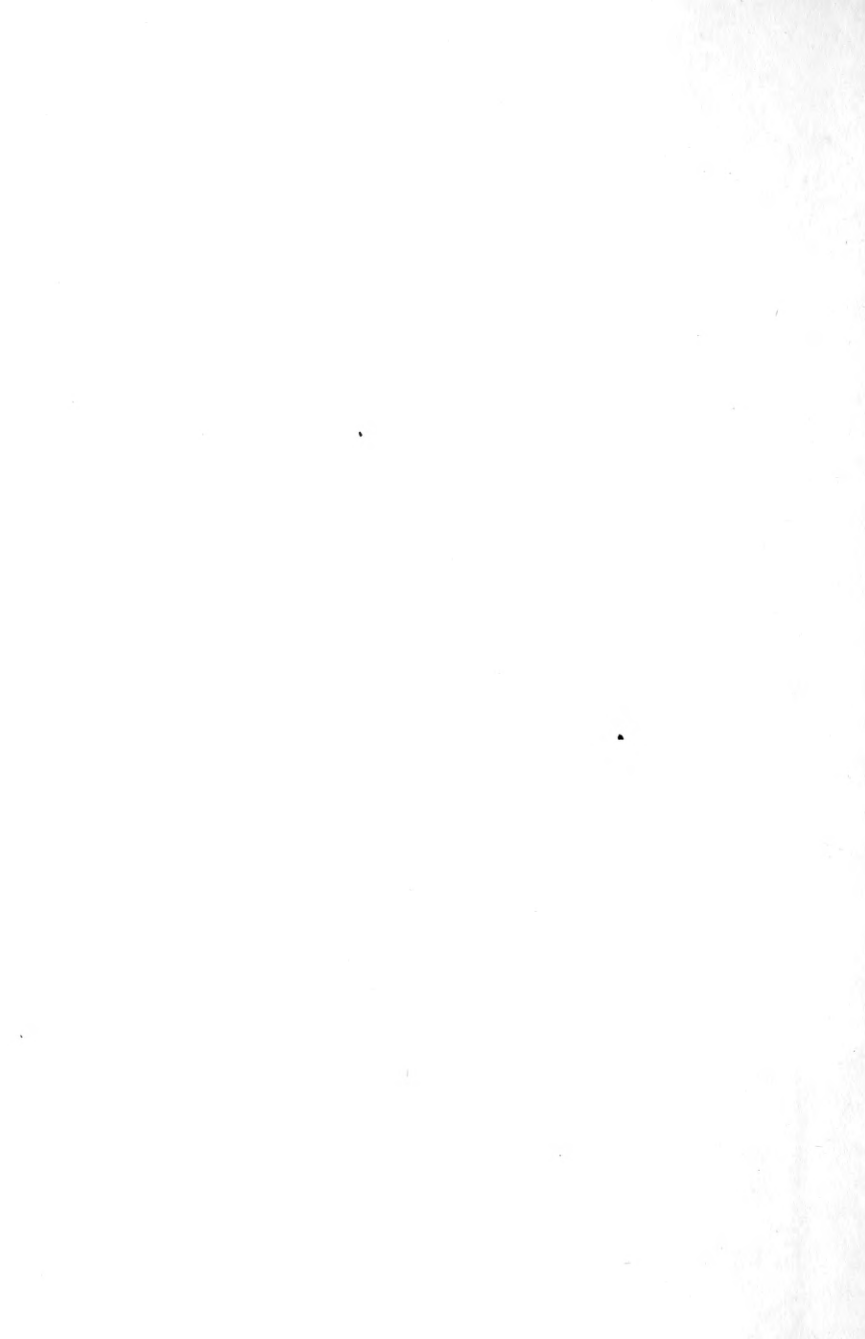
not a criminal, and therefore you cannot touch him." Has not the time arrived for us to make war an outlaw—to declare that any nation that starts a war is a criminal and stands branded before all the world as a breaker of the law of nations? At present war is recognized as the legitimate way of settling international disputes. Our own Constitution is built upon that assumption. That is why we have a Department of War and a Department of the Navy, and that the Secretaries of those two Departments are the confidential advisers of the President. We officially recognize war as legal, and because we recognize it as legal, many people think that it must be moral. Has the time not arrived for the nations to get together and declare that war is criminal, and that the leader of any nation, or group of leaders in any nation who lead a people into war, shall be taken out and shot as traitors to mankind? That is the next step to be taken. I think that all ought to be in favor of it. And along with this, we must also have a court of international justice. We must bring the whole international realm under the sovereignty of law. So long as there is no supreme court, nations will continue to arm. No nation will submit to injustice. Until there are tribunals of justice, nations will continue to fight. It is impossible to eliminate war without establishing a World Court. Such a court is already in existence.

Forty-seven nations have gone into it, and are backing it up. The United States is not in. There is an American among the judges, but he was not placed there by our Government. Forty-seven nations backing up a World Court for the adjudication of international disputes and the Great American Republic not one of the forty-seven! Our country not in! My country not there! Oh, the shame of it! The scandal of it! The pity of it! What a tragedy! Do not allow another day to pass without dedicating yourself to the World Court. We must have a union of all the nations of the world. We could not have peace on this continent until our States were united. There must be a United States of the World. Do not allow another day to pass without dedicating yourself to that high ideal.

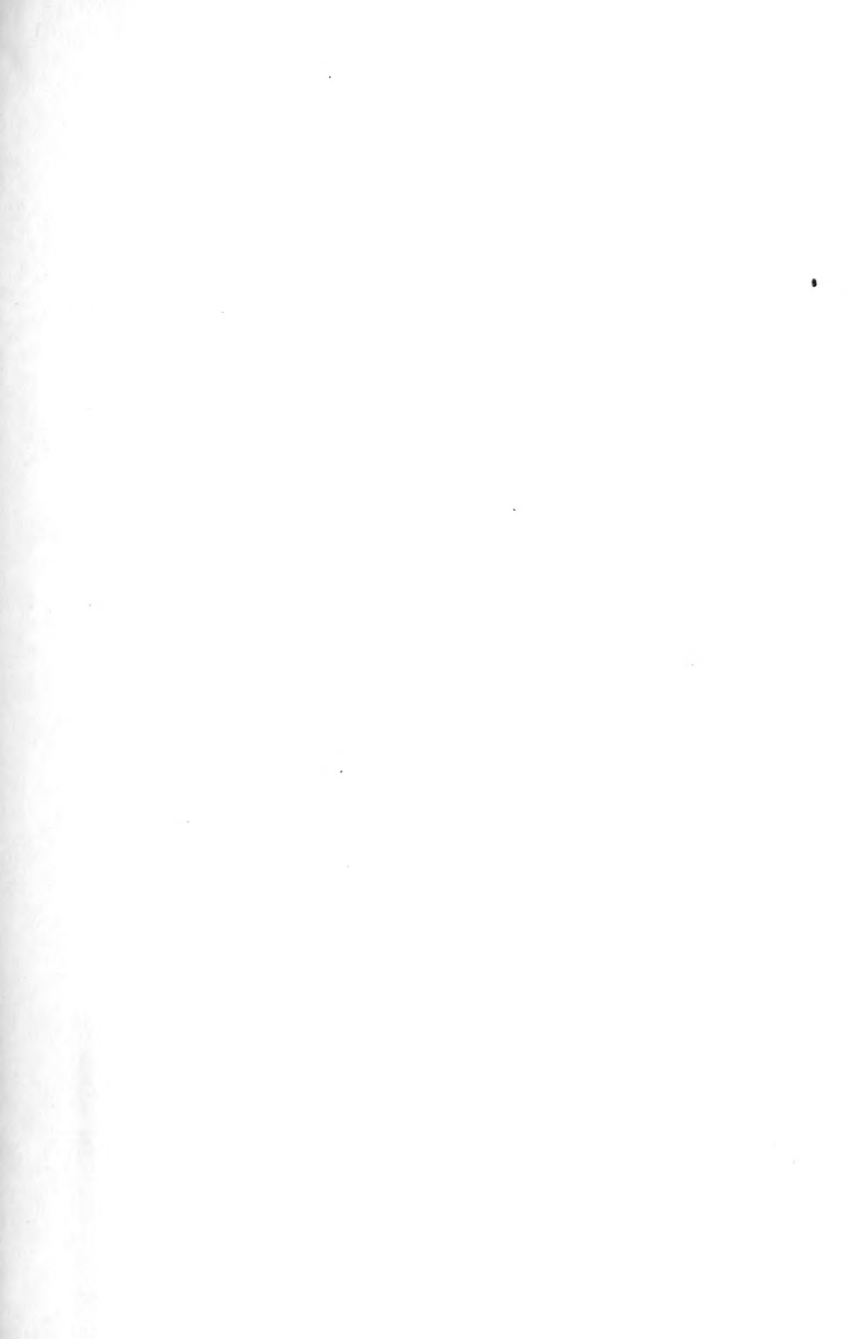
In a letter recently written by our President to the Commander of the American Legion, he said that "Armistice Day ought to be celebrated not simply by thinking of war and of the men who died in the war, but by dedicating ourself to the cause of perennial peace and the outlawry of war." That is one of the finest things which our President has ever said. When he said that, he took his place by the side of Lincoln, who, in the cemetery at Gettysburg said, that the world did not care much for what he and others said there, they were interested in what men had done there, and the duty of the

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living was to dedicate themselves to the great work which the dead had begun but had not finished. We promised our boys that they were fighting a war to end war, and we are unfaithful to them if we do not keep our promise. We are recreant to our trust if we do not use every ounce of our strength for the creation of a Parliament of Man, a Federation of the World.







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